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ABSTRACT

A study investigated how a teaching approach that emphasized literature would affect children's writings and help them to apply elements of form and content. Six first grade classes in a rural Newfoundland school district participated in the study; the students performed similarly on overall readiness. The class randomly selected as the experimental group (the "literature group") was judged to be representative of the whole group; the other five classes, using basal readers, formed the control group. Hypotheses predicted that the literature group would (1) produce writings superior to those of the basal reading classes, and (2) develop a sensitivity to good form and content. Subjects, 18 first graders, wrote and read selections of poetry, fairy tales and fantasy in a pretest/posttest scenario. Findings were categorized under six major headings: form, content, vocabulary, sentence structure, writer reaction and originality. Findings suggest that the literature approach helped to broaden children's experiences beyond their own egocentric world, influencing the length, fluency, and literary quality of their writing. The class demonstrated a high standard of writing and performance in both its language development and use of literary techniques. In contrast, the basal class's writings revealed simple sentences, relatively undeveloped stylistic features, and a lack of vocabulary depth. Findings suggested that literature be used extensively with all children on a regular basis to further their language development, flow of ideas, and production of alternate writing forms. (Literature references are appended, as are two samples of children's writings.) (JD)

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USING CHILDREN'S LITERATURE
TO FOSTER WRITTEN LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT

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I thank Margaret Dalton, grade one teacher, for her cooperation in collecting the data for this study. I thank Stephen P. Norris for his helpful comments and criticisms throughout the writing of this paper.

USING CHILDREN'S LITERATURE TO FOSTER WRITTEN LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT

This study was exploratory and comparative in nature, designed to further understand the potential of children and of children's literature as manifested in children's written language. Two main questions were studied: (1) Would a children's literature focus affect children's written products as compared with the written products of children in a basal program and, if so, how?; and (2) Would a literature focus help children apply elements of form and content in their written products?

A relationship between literature and children's writing seems to be a common sense notion, although little evidence exists to support one. Studies (Huck, 1965; Cohen, 1968; Cazden, 1972; Chomsky, 1972; Cullinan, Jaggar, and Strickland, 1974; Brown, 1977; and Cramer, 1978) lend strong support for using children's literature to improve language development. These studies concerned oral language and reading development rather than written language but both Huck and Cramer did strongly advocate the use of literature to improve writing. It was hoped that their opinions would hold true in this study.

It was hypothesized that the literature approach class would exceed the basal reader approach classes in the quality of their written products and that, when given the opportunity, young children would develop a sensitivity to form and content in their writing. Further support for this hypothesis was garnered from the work of such people as Eckhoff (1983) and Goodman (1986). Eckhoff found the writing of the children she studied contained features of their basal reading texts which seemed to add little to the linguistic complexity of the children's sentences. Goodman called for action by stating that basals are out of step with current knowledge and that they

need replacement by more effective and soundly based materials. It is well beyond the province of this study to assert the superiority of one teaching approach over another, rather it is to promote the use of literature as a strong alternate approach.

At the primary level, there are many factors that could act as a deterrent to writing. The beginning primary child is faced with the burden of not being able to read, and of not being able to spell or punctuate. In some cases, the grade one child does not know how to form all the letters of the alphabet. The child's coordination may not be sufficiently developed to print on the line or to use correct spacing. These factors have often been perceived by teachers as reasons for not writing. Such a view by teachers results from a lack of understanding of the writing process. Unless teachers understand the writing process, the danger exists that the children will not be encouraged to write and may even be denied the opportunity to do so.

The opinion of many current researchers (Bissex, 1982; Gentry, 1982; Graves, 1983; Harste, Woodward, and Burke 1984) is that if children are provided with the right environment their writing will be fostered. Providing children with the right environment includes giving children credit for effective language use, for choosing their own topics, and encouraging them for writing their ideas.

It is my view that if children's writing is to develop and flourish, then not only should they be given the opportunity to write and to choose what they want to write, but they should also be introduced to the different forms of writing. The results of this study now suggest support for this view.

For the purposes of this paper, form is used in the literary sense meaning structure, genre. Content is used to mean ideas, subject matter. Form

refers to how, the way a piece is written and content refers to what is written.

Selection of Forms

Young children face many obstacles when asked to write a story or poem. They often feel that they do not have anything to write about, that they do not know how to plan and organize the writing. It seems that to consider the use of form or the structure model of stories is one possible route to go. Some researchers (Coe, 1978; and Stewig, 1982) feel that the emphasis in literature reading for young children should be on enjoyment rather than on form. Also, they suggest that the ideas from the literature will serve as sufficient motivation for students to write. Other researchers (Britton, 1970; Koch, 1973; and Chall and Jacobs, 1983) do not deny the importance of enjoyment, but in addition they advocate the use of model structures in story writing. The form of the structures offers children support to build their stories. Tom Newkirk convincingly wrote "any models [writing] which suggest that beginning writers are limited to a single kind of discourse fail to account for the diversity, even the virtuosity, of the beginning writer" (1985:602). Moreover, Laura Meringoff from Harvard University's Project Zero cautions that the form a story assumes influences the form the child's understanding assumes. More work on how writers compose, how they use content to compose - knowing about form may allow for a more effective structuring of content was seen by Odell (1986) as a promising research direction. Form was taken to be an important consideration in this study not as a blueprint for children's writing but rather as a potential design for their ideas, their meanings, and their writings which otherwise often dissolve into disorganized lists of events.

Many factors were taken into account in the selection of the literature forms for young primary children. The task of selecting suitable literature for children depends, to a large degree, upon the age and interest of the children involved. Allen and Seaberg (1972) recommend that the young child's literary experiences consist of poetry, fairy tales and fantasy. Genre selections used in this study are discussed in the following sections.

Fairy Tales

Most children at the grade one level are fascinated with the world of magic and make-believe. Favat (1977) advocates that fairy tales are enjoyed by all children between the ages of five and ten years. Relying upon the work of Piaget, Favat argues that the following essential features link child with tale: a belief in magic, a belief in animism, a casualness of child and tale, egocentricism and a sense of mortality. While Favat addresses these features he does emphasize that it is the form of the fairy tale that the child finds most appealing; it is short, has patterned repetitions with fairly predictable outcomes, it begins quickly, has action, and a happy conclusion. The hero is always sure to be rewarded, thus the child can find a certain amount of security.

Cumulative fairy tales considered to be the simplest of the tales were selected from the children's classics as well as from award-winning lists. Tales of magic were selected similarly. For a complete list of fairy tales selected see Appendix A.

Fantasy

Interest in fantasy runs very high in children as it provides a vent for their imaginations. Fantasy characteristics which appeal to children are the distinctive style, interesting story patterns, and memorable

characterizations (Arbuthnot and Sutherland, 1972). The special quality of fantasy is that it concerns things that cannot really happen or that it is about people or creatures which do not exist. Yet within the story scheme is a self-contained logic; a wholeness that has its own reality. There are animals that can talk, and inanimate objects that are personified, often in a humorous way. Generally, it seems children enjoy fantasy as a change from the here and now to other worlds which are incredible, exciting and satisfying.

Books of fantasy selected for use in this study were those rated as the children's classics and those which for years have been the preferred books of young children. A complete list of books used is provided in Appendix A. Authorities on Children's Literature (Sebesta and Iverson, 1975; Sutherland and Arbuthnot, 1977) advocate the use of picture books with primary school children. With this consideration in mind, picture story books were chosen as the medium for selection and presentation of fairy tales and fantasy.

Poetry

Authorities tell us that children should be acquainted with poetry (Koch, 1970; Allen and Seaberg, 1972; Cramer, 1978; McCord, 1978; Hurst, 1982; Jacobs, 1983) and should be given many opportunities to create their own. Poetry can be a means of helping children make sense out of their worlds. It seems children are attracted to poetry for its singing quality, the melody and the movement of the words and the lines. Also, children enjoy poetry because of its story content, its alliteration and repetition, and its vivid sensory impressions. Since rhyme is a difficult feature for young children to work with in their writing, direct attention to it was not a part of this study. Children were encouraged to use free verse. Koch (1970) and Jacobs

(1983) point out that repetition adds strength and interesting forms to children's poems, as does comparison and imagery.

In keeping with the views of these authorities, the poetry used in this study included selections from nursery rhymes as well as selections from individual poets including David McCord, Aileen Fisher, Myra Cohn Livingston, Eve Merriam and John Ciardi. These people have gained recognition for excellence in the area of children's poetry. Selected poems from anthologies were also read to the children. For a complete list of poetry selections see Appendix A.

Not all of the features of each genre were pointed out to the children because it was felt that the grade one child would not be able to deal with more than a few. Those features selected for presentation and discussion with the children are discussed in the procedure section of this paper. The criteria used to evaluate the children's written language development are discussed next.

Evaluation Criteria for Children's Writing

Criteria to assess children's written language involves several important considerations. First, one of the purposes of the writing was to determine the influence of listening to literature on the form and content of children's written language, so these two features were included. Second, one should consider the purposes of the writing activity. Many researchers (Rupley, 1976; Tripp, 1978; Searle and Dillon, 1980) advocate that the purpose should be for enjoyment and development of fluency rather than on the mechanics of writing. Furthermore, since the children were still struggling with the mechanics of spelling, handwriting and punctuation, these factors were not considered as part of the criteria.

Children's writing was examined for specific features of fairy tales, fantasy and poetry. In addition, the children's writings were examined for other elements of form and content. Models of evaluative writing categories such as the work of Loban (1963), Moslemi (1975), and Brown (1977) include originality, characterization, sentence structure, vocabulary and writer reaction. Story title was also included, according to Applebee (1978) children as young as two and one half years have a sense of story characterized by such conventions as a title, formal closing and consistent past tense. Brown (1977) further implies that story sense is concerned with correct sequencing, characterizations, dialogue and the 'ability to use the language of the story' including varied and complex sentence patterns and vocabulary.

In addition to the elements of regularity, variety and timeliness, Tway (1980) would look for features she calls "nuggets." These are indicators of promise in a child's writing. They would include original comparisons; interesting observations; elaborations; universal treatment or twist to unusual ideas or expressions; creative spinoffs from traditional or popular stories; word play; contrived spellings for effect; spoof on vagaries of life; vivid impression; and surprise ending.

The work of Wilkinson, Barnsley, Hanna, and Swan (1983) looked at the quality of thought, of feeling, of moral stance as well as style. Hence, in any comprehensive model of writing factors such as cognition, affect, morals, and style must be considered.

The recurring features of children's writing from the above mentioned sources have been incorporated with the view of writing in this study (a focus on the content and form of children's writing from literature read to

them) to comprise the evaluation model used. Evaluation is seen here primarily as a way to develop writing competence not as an assessment model. The evaluation model is comprised of six broad categories further detailed by specific questions under each as illustrated by the following.

Evaluation Criteria for Writing in the Primary Grades

I. Classification of Form

- A. Egocentric - Is the writing concerned solely with self, or does it include a distancing? Is the writer aware of a sense of audience?
- B. Fairy Tales - Does it employ a traditional beginning and ending? Does it make use of past tense? Does it include repetition?
- C. Fantasy - Does it contain fanciful or imaginative happenings or elements? Does the story contain plot development? Does it have a beginning, middle, and ending?
- D. Poetry - Does it contain poetic form? Does it contain feeling or emotion? Does it contain repetition? Does it contain imagery? Does it contain comparison?

II. Content - Classification of Sense of Story

- A. Coherence - Does each part relate to the whole?
Does it have a title? Does the title suit the story?
- B. Character - Are the characters developed? Do they have names? Are they stereo-typical?
- C. Dialogue - Is dialogue used to add insight to character? Is it used to bring immediacy to the situation?
- D. Climax - Is there a definite unfolding of events or is it a mere cataloguing? Is correct sequence followed?
- E. Setting - Is there a definite setting or is it undefined or general?

III. Vocabulary

- 1. Does the writing show use of a variety of words?
- 2. Does the writing show use of adjectives and adverbs?
- 3. Does the writing show use of verbs and verb tense?
- 4. Does the writing show use of vivid words - picture words, figurative language?
- 5. Does the writing show use of appropriate words?

IV. Sentence Structure

- 1. Does the writing show use of a variety of sentences such as interrogative, imperative, exclamatory?

2. Does the writing show use of a variety of sentence type such as simple, complex?
3. Does the writing show use of sentence inversion?
4. Does the writing show use of sentence expansion?

V. Writer Reaction

Does the writer show emotional qualities such as a sense of humor, joy, sadness and the like?

VI. Originality

Does the writer invent a new element or twist to a traditional story or plot? Does the writer use original title, character, setting, beginning or ending?

These six dimensions of form, content, vocabulary, sentence structure, writer reaction, and originality confirm that the evaluation focus was upon the form and the content of the children's written products.

Methodology

This study was designed to study any influence of literature on the form and content of children's writing. The planned literature program emphasized a verbal rich environment through reading and discussing selected stories and poems from recommended sources (see Appendix A for the list of selections).

Sample

Six grade one classes in a rural Newfoundland school district were selected for the study. These schools were selected because of their proximity to the university and because of the similarity of the student populations they serve. Schools in rural districts generally have minimal socioeconomic differences. All the students had been administered the Metropolitan Readiness Test at the beginning of the school year. Overall

readiness refers to the extent to which the six tests (Word Meaning, Listening, Matching, Alphabet, Numbers, and Copying) combine to form a composite readiness measure. Students from each of the six schools performed similarly on overall readiness. All classes were using a basal series approach to reading. Writing was a time-table event frequently characterized by such activities as completing a workbook page, filling in a ditto sheet, completing set blanks, and copying.

The class randomly selected for the study, hereafter called the literature approach class, was judged to be representative of the other classes in skills and abilities that contribute to readiness for grade one instruction. The class consisted of eighteen students, five boys and thirteen girls. Eighty books were selected to be read and discussed with the children during the twelve week research period and comprised the sole language arts program. The remaining five grade one classes constituted the basal reader approach groups. The six classes totalled one hundred and thirty children. The teachers in the basal reader groups proceeded as usual with literature read daily, but which was not selected on the basis of any prescribed criteria nor followed-up in any direct way.

Procedure

The literature approach group was read selections of literature on a regular daily basis for a period of twelve weeks. The twelve weeks were divided into three phases. During phase one (weeks one to four) the main emphasis was on reading and writing fairy tales, phase two (weeks five to eight) concentrated on fantasy reading and writing. During phase three (weeks nine to twelve) the main emphasis was on poetry reading and writing even though poetry was read to the children during the entire study.

One of the purposes of this study was to familiarize children with alternate forms of writing, so particular distinctive features of fairy tales, fantasy and poetry were discussed before and after the readings. The literature reading was done in a forty minute morning session and the writing was done in a forty minute afternoon session. Each phase of the study is briefly described as follows.

Phase One. The introduction to fairy tales was begun with those that are considered to be the simplest, the cumulative tales such as "The Old Woman and her Pig". These were followed by other repetitious and sequential cumulative tales but which contained well-rounded plots such as "Little Red Riding Hood". The cumulative tales were followed by tales of magic such as "Jack and the Beanstalk". Prior to reading each fairy tale there was a discussion. The discussion centred on three aspects, to introduce the story title and to solicit predictions as to what it might be about, to share personal experiences if someone had heard it before or had experienced something similar, and to inform the children that fairy tales have unique features. After reading each fairy tale, a discussion focussed on the confirmation or disconfirmation of the children's predictions. Also, the children were asked to recount what they would have done in a similar situation. The main features discussed in fairy tales were (i) fairy tales begin with 'Once upon a time', (ii) fairy tales include repetitions of words and phrases, and (iii) fairy tales have a predictable, happy ending. In addition, certain activities were included such as choral speaking, dramatization, miming, discussion, and art. The nature of the activity depended to a large extent upon the appropriateness of the story and the children's interest. In the afternoon session a discussion of the morning's

story was held to highlight those features of fairy tales for possible inclusion in the children's writing. The children were encouraged to write a fairy tale. It could be based on any reading or it could be on whatever they wanted. Children were encouraged to invent their spellings, to edit their stories, and to read their stories to the class.

Phase Two. At the end of the first four weeks of fairy tales the children were introduced to stories of fantasy. The essential feature of these stories was in the plot. It concerned something which could not possibly have happened in the world of reality, and yet it contained a certain logic so that the stories were convincing. The discussions before and after reading followed the same pattern as that for fairy tales described in phase one. The main features discussed in fantasy were (i) fantasy must have a fanciful plot, and (ii) fantasy has fundamental story features which include beginning, middle, and ending. In the afternoon session the procedure was the same as for fairy tales except the children were encouraged to write a fantasy story.

Phase Three. Young children have limited exposure to poetry so it was decided that poetry be read to the children throughout the twelve weeks of this research. However, only during the last four weeks were features focussed upon as poetry was read, discussed, and written. The broad features presented were feeling, repetition, comparison, and imagery. In particular, feeling was discussed by asking about the author's emotional feelings, does the poem convey feelings of joy, sadness, anger, and so on. The children were asked if sounds, words, or images were repeated. Also, whether each line of the poem began or ended the same way. The children were asked whether the author compared one object or event with another, and whether the

comparisons were ordinary or unusual? And finally, the author's use of imagery was introduced to the children by discussing images of sight, sound, taste, touch, and smell. The poetry phase was introduced with nursery rhymes to give the children a sense and feel for rhythm. Next, poems were read from various anthologies, covering a variety of topics so the children would learn poetry can be about any subject and it doesn't have to rhyme. Poems were read, discussed, and written following a procedure similar to that used throughout phases one and two.

Data Analysis

The data for this study was collected over a twelve week period from January through April. At the end of the research period, 1200 stories and poems had been written by the children. Three types of data were collected: written notes of observations and of the children's comments about their writing, scribe versions of children's oral reading of sometimes indecipherable stories, and the children's written products.

Criteria to assess the children's written language were used as a way to determine the children's level of language attainment before and after the exposure to literature. It should be pointed out that since there seems to be a general consensus among authorities on children's writing (Applebee, 1978; Gentry, 1982; Graves, 1983) that writing is a developmental process, then it was not expected that all of the criteria in the evaluation model would be contained in each writing sample. The children's written products were analyzed after each phase of the study. Such a three phase analysis afforded the researcher information as to possible developmental trends.

A one point system was consistently used in the scoring of a child's written product. For example, each time a child stated a setting, one point

was given; for each time a child gave specific evidence of form (fairy tale, fantasy, poetry), one point was given. This means that for every instance in which a child used one of the evaluation criteria as specified by the questions a point was given. As previously indicated the evaluation criteria consisted of six main dimensions: form, content, vocabulary, sentence structure, reaction, and originality. For instance, a maximum score of eleven was possible on the dimension of content. A total score was obtained by the summation of the scores on each evaluation criterion. An analysis of covariance was used with the children's performance prior to the research period as the covariate. The literature approach class showed an overall increase on all six dimensions of the writing evaluation model over the basal approach, significant at .005.

Research in writing is very much in the exploratory stages. This study was initially partially designed as more or less an input-output type study. Yet, as it unfolded, I recognized that so much was going on between the input and output that a qualitative description of the children's performance would be far more informative and comprehensive than a statistical report. The following description reports what the children were writing prior to, during, and upon completion of the research project.

Results and Discussion

Findings are reported by first summarizing the writing of all children prior to the study, followed by a comparison of the children's writing in the basal reader approach groups with the writing of the children in the literature approach after the twelve week research period. The final section is a summarization of the developmental trends in the writing of the literature approach children.

The writing evaluation criteria were used as a measure of the writing products of the grade one children. In order to determine if the exposure to literature as described in this study had any influence upon the children's writing it was necessary to examine the type of writing that occurred prior to this study.

Prior to the study much opposition was expressed on the part of the children at the beginning of the school year when first encouraged to write. Comments like "We can't spell," "We don't know how to write," were expressed repeatedly. The following points are synthesized from the six classrooms:

- (1). In the early stages of writing the children were lacking confidence in their ability and were spelling conscious.
- (2). The children relied heavily on their basal readers for the content and vocabulary of their writing by repeating words and phrases typical of the basals.
- (3). Stylistic features such as 'too' as a terminal marker and 'the end' were used almost invariably by the children.
- (4). Children's stories all began with 'Once upon a time' even though their writing was egocentric in nature and consisted primarily as a cataloguing of events giving little evidence of originality.
- (5). Few descriptive words were used and the use of sensory words was non-existent. Although names of characters were used and dialogue was present, no real development of characters or dialogue was evident in the children's writing.
- (6). With the exception of love, other expressions of emotion were missing from the written samples. The children mostly stated facts without making personal comments.

(7). The children's concept of story did not reflect a sense of conflict and solution nor give evidence of a beginning, a middle or an ending.

Prior to the commencement of the study many of the children were producing only a few lines and those who produced more, generally repeated ideas.

After the twelve week research period, children's writing from the five basal approach classrooms was qualitatively compared with the writing of those in the literature approach class. Children's writing was collected from all six classes during the two week period immediately following the research period. This was done upon advice from Wilkinson et al., (1983) that in order to acquire a comprehensive picture of children's writing more than one sample is necessary.

Basal Approach Classes

For clarity of presentation the six major headings of the evaluation criteria are used to organize the findings.

Form. Whether these students were asked to write a story or simply to write whatever they wished, the results were generally the same. It seems that the children's concept of story still consisted of an ordering of a series of events with very little character or detail included. Tracey's story is representative of what the children wrote.

School
At school we work
When the bell rings
we have our recess
And we play. We
play with Leggo blocks. When
recess is over we

sull
 ta sull we work
 wan the pell res
 we have are reses.
 And we play we
 play with legos. Wan
 reses is over. We
 co bak to work.
 we Do are math.
 And wan the saked
 pell res. It is tim
 for lise
 Tracey M.

go back to work.

We do our math.

And when the second

bell rings. It is time

for lunch.

Content. In the main, the children's stories consisted of a retelling of their experiences, generally factual with little expression of originality. Probably because they were so close to these experiences, the children seemed to assume that everyone else knew what they were talking about. Consequently, they frequently began their writing in the middle of an experience without an introduction or beginning. The stories appeared to end in the middle of nowhere or when the end of a page had been reached. Lisa's story is an example.

At my Grandmother's
One time I was
at my Grandmother's
And my other
Grandmother was
there too. And
I went up to
the stairs. And I
saw my dog.
My dog
surprised me too
because he had a
box and in the box.

Lisa Terry
at My Grandmother
one time I was
at my grandmothers
and my other
grandmother was
there too. and
I went up two
the stairs. and I
saw my Dog.
my Dog
surprised me too.
because he had a
box and in the box

Often one sensed that the writing was incomplete but the words 'the end' or 'that's the end' would be used to indicate that the child wished the writing to terminate. Jamie's story ending was common in the children's writing.

My Car

My car is red and black.
My car can go fast.
My car is a race car.
I went to the ball game
in my race car. When the ball game
was over I went home.

my car
my car is red and Black.
my car can go faerst.
my car is a rae car.
I went to The Ballgame
in my rae car wenn The Ballgame
wens over I weel home.
The End

Jamie M.

The End

The titles of the stories usually included the word 'my', for example, 'my sister' or 'my Christmas'. Very often the story was only vaguely related to the title. The stories contained little evidence of plot development, rather they were primarily a listing of events with little detail or elaboration included. Lynette's story and its translation follows.

Christmas

I like to go skating
and I like to go skating
with my little brother
and we make a snowman
and we make a snowhouse
and christmas is fun.

Christmas
I lork to go saenu
and I lork to go senawa
waei my little bowae
and we make a saow make
and we make a saow
hauen and christmas it
fun.

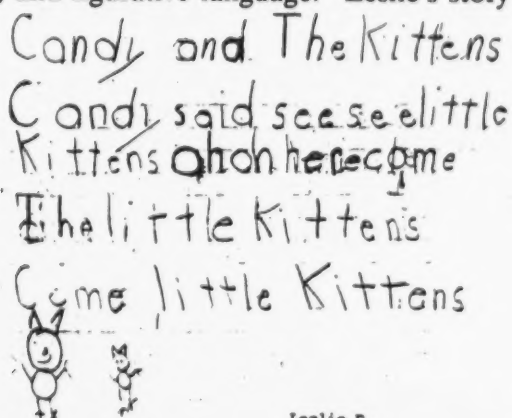
Lynette M.

The children in the basal approach classes practically always neglected time and setting. They wrote about events as if they were separated from time and

space, or with just the slightest reference to the location of where the events occurred.

Characterization was minimal in the children's writing. Any dialogue used did little to add insight to character. The element of repetition was used rather sparingly in the children's writing as was the use of descriptive vocabulary.

Vocabulary. The children in the basal reader classes were still heavily dependent on their basal text for vocabulary and ideas. The children were very dependent upon those words contained in their basal readers, making very restricted use of a few adjectives while at the same time making no use of adverbs, vigorous verbs, and figurative language. Leslie's story is typical.



Leslie P.

Sensory words that evoke responses of sight, sound, taste, touch and smell were absent from the children's stories.

Sentence Structure. Their sentences consisted chiefly of simple nouns, verbs and function words, and most tended to be one line in length corresponding to how sentences are written in their basals. There were only three examples of compound and complex sentences in the children's writing.

Writer Reaction and Originality. Although their stories dealt generally with their experiences, their point of view or personal reactions did not

show through very often. When emotion was used in the stories it usually dealt with the child's basic need to be loved and accepted. Words such as 'nice', 'like' and 'love' were frequently expressed, a few examples follow.

my mom likes me.	me.
I like my mom to	I lik me
my dad likes me to.	my fuses likes me
my mom likes dad to.	my mother likes
my dad likes mom to.	my father likes me
my mom can run and	Deirdre to
jump to. my dad can	my nana and pop likes me.
run and jump to.	

John C.

Lealla R.

No expression of sadness, joy, anger, fear, frustration or loneliness could be found in any of their writing.

Other observations of the basal reader classes suggest that in the majority of cases there was little indication of a sense of audience in that many of the children made no attempt whatsoever to edit anything they had written. Also, it became very clear that many of the children tended to use only those words which they could spell through the aid of an available text. As a result, their vocabulary use was extremely limited and their language sounded contrived. Stories generally consisted of two to three lines to maybe a page. Even though the children in all five classes were given the option to write anything they wished during their writing classes for two weeks following the research period none of the children wrote a poem.

Literature Approach Class

The six major categories of the evaluation model are used to organize the report of the findings.

Form. At the end of the twelve weeks, with the exception of one child, the children were able to write fairy tales. Both fairy tales and fantasies written by the children had definite beginnings and definite conclusions. The children's cumulative fairy tales often ended abruptly which was typical of those read in class. Even though the endings of the fairy tales were not always fully developed the children ensured that the good character was safe and happy. See Appendix B for Shona's story "The Happy Copil" and a translation from her oral reading of it. In the majority of the fantasies the endings were more fully developed. In addition, some of the fantasies contained fully developed middles. See Appendix C for Heather's story "The Dark Old Tunnel" and its translation. It appears that throughout the study, the children were moving towards a deeper sense of story for even though they were not always fully developed, events were presented in chronological order. The children first achieved competence in developing the beginning, then the ending, and lastly the middle of the story.

The first poems written by the children showed their attempts to have the words rhyme. Their attention seemed then to shift to a free verse form where the children tried to say something meaningful in their poetry. Although the children used free verse, they were aware that line length in poetry was not the same as in prose. Many children tried to arrange just a few words on each line so that the physical appearance distinguished it from prose. John's poem is a typical example.

Big and Little
If i ware
As big is a
Tree i wand
Be a lat taller
Than you.

And if I war
 A big dear I
 Wad run traw
 the woods if I
 War a small
 mouse I wad
 swik and swik
 if i war a baby
 Kitten I wad
 meaw and
 meaw.

John

Content. At the end of the twelve weeks fantasies contained greater evidence than the fairy tales that the children were striving towards plot development. The stories contained much detail and information and the children seemed to be concerned with providing necessary information to present a suitable background to their stories. In addition, the fantasies stated a more specific time, as time in the fairy tales was limited to 'once upon a time'.

The first fairy tales written by the children were limited to characterization but after a couple of weeks, the children began to include visual descriptions. By the end of the four weeks, they were using vivid and effective character descriptions although only one character in a story was described in detail. Study Lisa's description of a witch in the following excerpt.

A Weh. and rms as: little
 Once upon a time as: a pnynt on a
 Then was a cold neft. and lang as:
 croct weh. and had soft as: a blact.
 ice as: big as: so^{sc}is. and angrey as: a
 master.

The fantasies showed a great deal of inconsistency in the use of characterization. While there seemed to be a diminishing of characterization on the part of some children in the fantasies, others used dialogue to reveal characters more effectively than had been done in the fairy tales. The accompanying dialogue brought not only immediacy to the story but also new insight into character revelation. Dale's story "The Friendly Bear" is a worthy choice for illustration.

the faid Bear
one Bad did A faid Bear came
to A Little girl's house
the Little girl said dot eat
me Up Im A faid Bear
I dont eat up girls
and Says I eat up fish and
Ic He fish fa fine Imc
go To got the fi for
me and you OK
But get som. I will the
Bear got a big blue fish
from the water he took
it Out in hes Clas he Bat
it in to the girl the girl
Kook it up it was dlish I
Like It said the bear I Like
it two said the girl th the
bear tra home.

Dale

Much effective use of repetition was evident in the children's fairy tales. Repetition of words, phrases and events served to heighten the suspense and to add significance to particular situations. The following example taken from a child's story illustrates this, "I ran away from a

little old man, a frog a dog a fox a pig and I can run away from you to. Then he met a bear." Repetition was also used extensively by the children in their poetry writing. In many instances it intensified the mood and added a significance to the experience that the children were trying to convey.

Sharon's poem illustrates this point.

Blue Blue Bird
Bird goes tweet tweet
tweet.
Then goes and builds its
nest.
Then the mother lays her
egg.
The egg hatches.
And then to go flap flap
flap.
Sharon

Vocabulary. The vocabulary of the children showed a steady growth. The first fairy tales included only one or two adjectives, for instance "old woman," "poor man," and "brown fox," however, with time and exposure to literature many more adjectives were used. In addition, several were frequently used in reference to the same noun, "Once upon a time, there lived a nice little kind troll who lived in a little, pretty, purple house". As children continued to write, descriptive adjectives were increasingly used to the point where it was rare to find a noun used without an accompanying adjective. Adverbs of time and place such as, "After he had walked for a long time he came upon a huge castle," were also noted in the fairy tales which served to bring clarity and preciseness to the situation. In addition, adverbs of manner were used more extensively in children's fantasy stories,

as were adverbs in general, "The fairy said to herself quietly, 'I must have that girl for my servant.'"

Vigorous action words were only minimally used in the fairy tales but the children generally tended to use them with greater frequency and with wider variety in the fantasies. Many of the verbs which were read in the literature occurred in the children's stories. Verbs such as 'scooped, swooped, leaped, scampered, strolling, gobbled, tramped and splashed' were common occurrences. Consider David's effective verb choices when writing about his day's flight with Sam, the giant eagle, "We swooped down to my place, and I climbed into the window, sneaked into my bed and went to sleep."

Effective use of similes, primarily in connection with character descriptions, was noted in children's fairy tales. You will recall Lisa's description of the witch. In fantasies, similes were also used to describe how objects looked as well as to describe how actions occurred. In poetry, both similes and metaphors were effectively used to compare two objects or events which are not usually associated. Jason uses metaphor and simile almost simultaneously when a sheep's white woolly coat is compared to a blanket and a cloud in his poem.

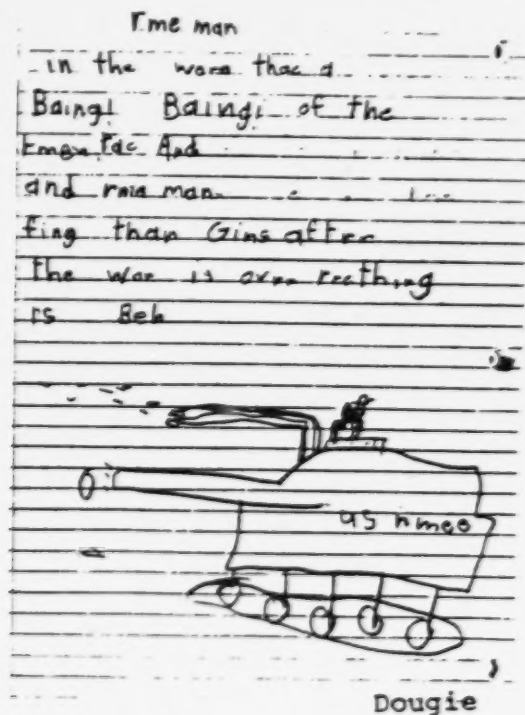
Scapa
 Scapa with your white blot
 its smea like a cloud in the
 sky
 you make lalee white blot
 Scapa you are beautiful

Jason

In a limited way, examples of personification were used in the fairy tales and fantasy stories to show human characteristics of speaking and running. In poetry there was a very strong focus on personification. Elements in nature

were addressed as if they were capable of understanding. Flowers, trees and grass were referred to as wearing dresses and shoes and of dancing and singing. Rainbows and clouds were said to be smiling. These examples all serve to magnify a feeling or experience and serve as a means for the children to reflect and ponder on the workings of the universe.

The children's fairy tales, fantasies and poetry were rich in visual images. Often the children used contrast in their poems to emphasize images of sound, Dougie contrasted the noise of guns with the silence of death in his poem "Army Men".



Also, their poems were rich in connotative words that stir the imagination and evoke strong feelings. A few examples of hyperbole were noticed in the children's poems, notice that the rain came down in buckets in Dion's poem.

The Rian
 the rian is
 coming down
 in boats all over
 me and I got
 wet and wet and
 wet a sota
 Dion

Sentence Structure. There was a predominance of simple sentences in the early fairy tales written by the children. In the fantasies there was a greater sentence variety. The beginning poetry attempts would have to be described as written with complete sentences. But as the children gained experience in both listening to poetry and writing their own, they learned to condense their thoughts. While declarative and interrogative sentences continued to receive the most use, there was a frequent and almost equal distribution of the imperative and exclamatory sentence. These statements are illustrated in the following excerpts from the children's writing: "tak the acrr up oit of the ohssn and away we will go, siad the captin in a varr agre laud vis" (take the anchor up out of the ocean and away we will go, said the captain, in a very angry loud voice); "wot is ura pubilm?" (what is your problem?); "thaes she wae saef four aver" (there she was safe forever); and "she opoet the winddo slole and she pekd down and saw a hug dog" (she opened the window slowly and she peeked down and saw a huge dog).

Writer Reaction and Originality. Although the fairy tales were largely retellings or recreations of those stories read in class, the children's originality began to blossom in fantasy as new characters and situations were

provided. In poetry, originality was displayed in the comparisons and unique ways words were used to express the children's feelings and ideas. In the poems, the children's feelings covered many topics such as nature, animals, people, God, and war yet it seemed that certain themes recurred. Love, happiness, and scary events seemed popular with the children. Hilliker (1982) suggests that this is common with young writers and that the themes may serve as a means of consolidating and recombining concepts and skills. The children's wonder and curiosity about their world around them was revealed. The children's poems are not merely descriptions of nature, they contain personal comments, reflections and queries. Jane's poem Silver seems to do all of these.

Silver Land
 The land
 Is covered
 with silver
 Silver trees
 and silver
 grass make
 everything look
 so beautiful
 Silver, Silver,
 I Love it
 April 18 /

Jane

Examples of humour, fear, delight, and frustration were expressed in the children's fairy tales. A greater use of emotion was evident in the fantasies through examples of sadness, happiness, joy, surprise, fear, jealousy, remorse, and compassion. Not only did the children make use of a

particular emotion but in about half of the stories there was an attempt to explain why the emotion was present, which added strength to their writing. An even greater use of emotion was expressed in the children's poetry which seems to indicate that they were aware from the beginning that poetry is concerned with feelings.

Other observations of the literature approach class suggested that as the children continued to write on a daily basis their writing revealed a gradual and ever increasing amount of each of the features discussed. An exception would be characterization where for some children it was less developed in fantasy (after 8 weeks) than it had been in fairy tales (after 4 weeks). This was perhaps due to the fact that the children were dealing with a new element that of creating original plots which seemed to take precedence over the previously learned skill of characterization.

Over the twelve week period attempts to edit their writing were also noted. At the end of phase one on fairy tales, only three children had started to use an arrow to insert a single word. Most children considered their fairy tales finished when written. By the time the children were writing fantasy in phase two, it seemed they were much more concerned with meaning, that is , with their writing making sense. Many more children began inserting missing words but none inserted sentences. They tended to give the missing information orally.

Developmental Trends in Children's Writing from Literature Approach

During the twelve weeks of the study certain developmental trends were suggested by the writing of the children in the literature approach class. These trends add another dimension to our understanding of how the children progressed over the twelve weeks.

A descriptive analysis of the fairy tales written by the grade one children revealed that tremendous growth had occurred in the children's written language. The majority of the children were capable of producing writing that was not egocentric. Their sense of story was growing although middles and endings were not always developed. They were able to include in their tales the features of repetition, past tense and have a formal beginning and ending. There was a gradual increase in the number of descriptive words used as well as an increase in vigorous verbs and more vivid language which reflected an increase in imagination and originality. Complex and varied sentences were being used. While much detail was being included many of the stories were still very much a listing of events.

It should be pointed out that it took the children a few days to make the transition in their writing from fairy tales to fantasy. A descriptive analysis of the fantasy stories written by the children showed that a few who had used the fairy tale form quite competently, occasionally reverted to egocentric writing. In the majority of samples the focus was directed away from self to other characters. Inconsistency was noted in the area of characterization. Sometimes the children depended less on visual descriptions and more on dialogue to reveal character. Other times, both description of character and dialogue were used sparingly by the same children. In still some other stories, description of character and dialogue were handled very well. The fact that some children had not developed characterization as well in fantasies as they had done in fairy tales is another confirmation that literacy development does not occur in a linear fashion.

Some of the children's fantasy stories were reflective of those read in the class differing in one or several aspects of characters, of setting, or of situations. The majority of the children's stories included a setting. Some stories included worldly settings while more original stories had realistic settings with highly imaginative events or characters. In one particular story a character was endowed with the supernatural ability of flying.

The fantasy stories written revealed that the children had a growing sense of story. Evidence of effective use of chronology in the beginning, middle and ending of their stories was noted. There was evidence that the children were concerned with meaningful communication. They often inserted words (never whole sentences) to enhance clarity when they read their stories and modified word choices with respect to the element of time in order to achieve preciseness, these revisions are illustrative of a growing awareness of audience. Also, the children's stories included such writer reactions as joy, sadness, surprise, fear, jealousy, and compassion. Although the plot was not always fully developed there was a certain unity and coherence. In most stories there was a growing towards an inclusion of details and an unfolding of action.

The influence of literature was noted in the rich and diverse vocabulary and the complexity of sentence structure. More adjectives, adverbs and stronger action words were included which helped give the stories clarity and exactness. Figures of speech from the stories read to the children were noted in their writing. Personification was extensively used. Stories contained a gradual increase in the use of sentence inversions, compound and complex sentences, phrases, and clauses.

An analysis of the children's poems revealed that considerable growth had occurred. Consider their initial attempts when they wrote such lines as 'My cat sat on the mat' to the final weeks of a twelve week study when the same student wrote, after a major sleet storm, such lines as 'The land is covered with silver, silver trees, silver houses, silver everywhere, I love it'.

Although many of the children's writings would probably be classified as prose, their examples illustrate that they are aware of certain poetic elements such as simile, metaphor, personification, exaggeration, and repetition. They demonstrated a marvelous capability of crystalizing their feelings by using rich words, images and comparisons that stir imaginations and evoke images. Some of the children's poetry gave new insight into otherwise ordinary and common occurrences. The originality of the children's language added a freshness and vigour to their poetic attempts that were absent prior to hearing poetry read. While many of the children's poems were about nature, they did not stop at mere statement and facts but rather succeeded in growing beyond to add their personal views and reflections. One important point to note is the sheer joy and sense of satisfaction that was evident when the children shared their poems. They glowed with the sense of accomplishment, fulfilment, and enthusiasm when creating their poems, when sharing their poems with friends and when listening to others.

It should be pointed out that not all the elements mentioned above were present in all of the children's writing samples but all of the samples did contain an increasing amount of many of the elements. Also, much diversity and variability were noticed in the children's writings, for instance, some children were clearly better fantasy writers than poets.

Conclusions and Implications

The importance of reading children's literature to children as a precursor to success in written language development seems unquestionable. It seems that the class participating in this study was helped to broaden their experiences beyond their own egocentric worlds to such an extent that they were able to produce alternate forms of writing. These grade one children wrote using features which allowed their writing to be classified as either fairy tale, fantasy or poetry.

The rich and diverse vocabulary from the stories and poems read to the children was used in their written language. Many of the vigorous action words, the rich figurative and sensory language from the literature appeared repeatedly in the children's writing. Much of the vocabulary not only was used on the day in which it was heard but often even weeks later. This suggests that the children were assimilating new information from the stories and poems read in class and were then able to capitalize upon that information when needed. The length, fluency, and literary quality of their writing flourished.

The five basal classes which did not use children's literature continued to use, after twelve weeks, simple sentences and relatively undeveloped stylistic features. They lacked breadth and depth of vocabulary in their writing as was the case prior to the study, whereas the literature class appeared to be much more sophisticated in their writing as evidenced in the increased complexity in vocabulary and sentence structure. It would seem that literature should be used extensively with all children on a regular basis to assist them in their language development, to assist them in their flow of ideas from which to write, and to offer them alternate forms of

writing. Professor Margaret Gill in her plenary address at the Fourth International Conference on the Teaching of English said " English is about what we can do and what children can do." She went on to say that we as educators often prevent children from doing what they can do.

The writing of stories and poetry should not be delayed in the grade one program just because children cannot read or spell. The children's first attempts to write were in many instances impossible to read without the children's oral translations. Nevertheless, they were given control of their language by being encouraged and supported to write their ideas. As the children continued to write they learned to make correct word segmentation and to arrive at a closer approximation of the conventional word spelling. Given what the children in this study were able to do after twelve weeks it appears that not only is it important that children be provided with daily opportunities to write but also that it is our responsibility to do so. Children should be given a purpose for their writing through listening to good literature so that it becomes a focus of communication. This can be done by having the children write fairy tales, fantasy and poetry rather than copying from the chalkboard or practicing the letters of the alphabet during writing. Children should share their writing. When the children in this study shared their writing, it helped them realize when their stories didn't make sense. They became critical listeners of their own stories because they wanted others to understand what they had written and to experience what they had felt.

While it cannot be denied that the exposure to literature seems to have had a tremendous positive effect upon the children's written language development, other factors must be considered. It must be recognized that

teacher support, the encouragement to engage in developmental spelling, the daily concentration on writing, the sharing of children's stories as well as other factors in their environment may also have contributed to the children's overall development. Acknowledging these potential influences there are some important points to be made from this study. First, that not only are grade one children capable of writing but they are also capable of a high standard of performance in both written language development and in using literary techniques. Second, grade one children can effectively produce alternate forms of writing such as fairy tales, fantasy and poetry, and can enjoy doing so, if they are exposed to and acquainted with some of the various features of each genre, and when encouraged to do so daily. Third, educators should be cognizant of the writing process and of the tremendous influence of literature on young children's written language development so as not to underestimate the potential of children to produce quality writing in various forms. The findings from this study suggest possible techniques that could be used in our teaching of writing to children.

Although this study was exploratory and comparative in nature, the findings are striking and warrant further investigation. The results of this study strongly suggest causal links between the use of children's literature and children's written language development. Related factors such as children's linguistic abilities and teacher influence also warrant further study. A logical next step in researching these suggested links would be to conduct a more narrowly focused and tightly controlled experiment thereby permitting the claim to such inferences.

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APPENDIX A

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Appendix B The Happy Couple

Once upon a time there lived a poor humble fisherman. He lived with his cruel old wife and two adorable children. The wife had black tangly hair. And little pale eyes. They lived in a old hut. One stormy miserable night their little old hut tumbled down on top of them. So they squeezed out of the heavy old wet boards. They crawled very slowly. They crawled in to a very bark dusty cold cave. They lied down on the dirty cold floor and fell fast asleep. While they were sleeping, very quietly a old blue fairy came by. She had a big basket of slime on her right arm. She peeped in the dark cave. She saw the two children, the fairy said to herself quietly, "I must have that girl for my servant." So that she wouldn't have to work any more. So she cast a sleeping spell over her very quietly. And carried her all the way to her black cold dusty slimy old castle and she broke the spell and shoved her into a scary old cage. Poor Jolene. One day while her father was walking in the hot sunny fields, he spied a fine looking young man. He was dressed in blue and he had a huge gigantic sword. It shone like diamonds. He was so amazed how he looked. Suddenly he thought about his daughter Jolene. So he went up to the boy and told him the whole story. And he asked him to rescue her and he answered "What will you give me?" "I will give my daughter for your wife," "Very well said the man." So that night he crept to her ugly castle and one zap and she was

Shona

The Happy Couple
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dead. He rescued the girl
married her in joy and
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for your wife very well said
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and one day and she was
dead. He rescued the girl
married her in joy and
lived happily ever after.

Shona

Appendix C The Dark Old Tunnel

One cold winter's day a little girl was playing in the nice cool snow. She was building a silly snowman. Then she made a snow angel and a snow house. She became so tired she went over to a tree and sat down. Then she spied a little door in the tree. She tapped on the door but no one answered. Then she took the little door knob and opened the little door. "Himmmmm I wonder if I will go in and see what is down there. It's pretty dark down there." "I will run in the house and get a lantern." So she ran into the house and got a lantern and went outside and down the stairs in the tree she went. "It's really dark down here." "There's a door on the wall I wonder what is down there." She opened the little door and made one step and down she fell for hundreds of years until she was ten. First she was seven, eight, nine, ten. Then she was down there. "Himmmmm, I wonder what is down here." "I will walk around and see exactly what is down here." Ha! this place is creepy and cold too brrrrr I hope there is a blanket down here." Just before her eyes a blanket fell. She was very surprised. "Himmmmm, I know that there is something fishy going on around here." So, I will wander around here and see what is wrong down here and I hope that there is a house around here with somebody who can tell me how to get home. So she wandered and wandered until she saw a big big house, she tapped on the big door. A pretty girl answered the door and said "Come in little girl and make yourself at home." I can't I want to go back to six 'cause I fell down" "Try my shoes on" "Okay" so she tried them on and fell asleep when she woke up she was six and she was home safe.

The drop off Tin Heather
One cold wint'rs day, a little girl was
playing in the nice col snow. Se was
bilting a sil' snowman. In se mad a
snow-agle and a snow house. Se became so
tired se went over to a tree and sat
down. In se sid a little door in the
tree se tap on the door but no one asle
In se took the little door knob and
open the little door. "Himmmmm I wonder if
I will go in and see wh' is down tr
It's p'ce dark down tr" I will run in
the house and get a ltrn. So se ran
into the house and got a ltrn
and out sid and down the stairs in
the tree se went. "It's reld dark
down hear." Trs a door on
the wall I wonder wh' is down tr?
se opd the little door and mad
one sep and down se fal. For h'rs of
se still she was ten for she was seven
eight nine ten. Tr se was down ten
Himmmmm I wonder wh' is down
here. I will wok arnd and see
wh' is down wh' is down here.
Ha! this ees is creep and cold too
brrrrr I hop tr is a blank down
here. Just befor her eis a
blanket. Fal she was vry suprised.
Himmmmm I wonder wh' is down
here. I will wok arnd and see
wh' is down wh' is down here.

here. So I will wander and
 here and see what is on down-
 here and I hope to find a
 house and live with somebody
 who can tell me how to go home.
 So I wander and wander until I
 saw a big big house so fast on
 the big door a pretty girl sat
 the door and said "come in little
 girl and make your self at home."
 I sat I was to go back to see
 cos. I fell down. Try my son
 OK so I tried to on a fall
 a slip when I woke up I was
 sick and I was home safe.